

# IELTS ADVANTAGE



## SPEAKING & LISTENING SKILLS

A step-by-step guide to a high  
IELTS speaking and listening score

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#### IELTS Advantage – Speaking & Listening Skills

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- Track 17: Unit 8 (Listening Section 2, three extracts)
- Track 18: Unit 8 (Listening Section 2, full-length)
- Track 19: Unit 8 (Listening Section 2, full-length)\*
- Track 20: Unit 8 (Listening Section 2, full-length)
- Track 21: Unit 8 (Listening Section 2, full-length)\*
- Track 22: Unit 9 (Listening Section 3, extract)
- Track 23: Unit 9 (Listening Section 3, full-length)\*
- Track 24: Unit 9 (Listening Section 4, extract)
- Track 25: Unit 9 (Listening Section 4, full-length)\*

\* In the IELTS test, there is a sufficient pause to allow students to read the questions. The recordings need to be paused at the relevant point(s) to enable students to do this.

## Introduction

### **Aim of the book**

*IELTS Advantage Speaking & Listening Skills* is designed for students who want to achieve a score of 6.5–7.0 or higher in the Speaking and Listening modules of the Academic IELTS exam. The majority of candidates aim to get at least 6.5, in order to study at university, to work abroad, to apply for a visa or to have proof of a good level of English. The book aims to develop your speaking and listening skills up to and beyond this level. Companion volumes in this series are *IELTS Advantage Writing Skills* and *IELTS Advantage Reading Skills*.

The book is divided into two sections: Speaking and Listening.

The content of the Speaking section has five main features:

- Format explanations and exam tips to help you predict and prepare for the Speaking test
- Grammar, vocabulary, collocations and expressions relating to the common themes and topics featured in the Speaking test
- Exam skills and strategies for the Speaking test
- Plentiful opportunities to practise speaking in the format of the Speaking test
- Audio examples on the accompanying CD of model Speaking tests

The content of the Listening section has three main features:

- Format explanations and exam tips to help you predict and prepare for the Listening test
- Development of strategies for listening and extracting the information necessary to answer the questions
- Listening practice material based on the accompanying CD

### **Using this book in the classroom**

Each unit comprises around 90–120 minutes of classroom material. The lessons can be taught as a short stand-alone course of around 20 to 30 hours, or can be used as supplementary material.

### **Using this book for self-study**

This book has much to offer as a self-study resource. The exam tips and explanations, the language-practice activities and the audio material on the CD will provide a thorough preparation for the Speaking and Listening tests. To get the best from the speaking activities, work with a 'study buddy'. For most of these activities, one person plays the role of the examiner and the other plays the role of the candidate. Then you reverse roles and repeat.

### **Organization of the book**

- Units 1 and 2: These focus on Speaking Part 1. In this part of the Speaking test, the examiner asks the candidate questions about familiar topics relating to his/her life.
- Units 3 to 7: These have an introductory section based on Speaking Part 1, followed by the main focus on Speaking Parts 2 and 3. In these parts of the test, the candidate prepares and delivers a short talk (Part 2), then discusses related topics further with the examiner (Part 3).
- Units 8 and 9: Listening



## ***Some features of the Speaking section***

- **Try it first!**

Before you start each section, you are encouraged to role-play speaking on the topic of the unit as if in the test. This can help to show you the strong and weak points of your speaking, so you can see how you need to improve.

- **Spotlight**

Explanation and practice of grammar, vocabulary, collocations and expressions which are particularly useful for talking about the topics of the unit and for answering the kinds of question typically asked in the Speaking test.

- **Exam skills**

Skills and strategies for improving the quality of your replies to the examiner's questions. These will help you to give more complex answers which fully demonstrate your ability to use English.

- **Prepare and practise**

Activities for organizing and developing your ideas so you will have plenty to say on the topics. These are followed by a role-play speaking on the topic as if in the exam, aiming to use language learned in the unit as much as possible.

- **Listen**

Listen to extracts from the Speaking test. Compare the model with your version in order to learn further useful ideas and strategies.

- **Pronunciation focus**

Tasks and suggestions for improving this essential aspect of spoken English.

- **Tips**

Extra advice and information for improving your performance on the day of the test.

- **Check and challenge**

Activities which review the content of the unit, plus suggestions for further study and skills development.

- **Four practice Speaking test role-plays**

Four full-length Speaking tests covering other topics which commonly appear in the exam. These give additional opportunities to practise speaking, and further demonstrate the structure of the test.

## ***Some features of the Listening section***

Explanations, advice, strategy ideas and practice relating to all the formats of the Listening test:

- Multiple choice
- Matching
- Completing sentences
- Completing tables
- Completing forms
- Completing notes
- Writing short answers
- Completing summaries
- Completing flow charts
- Labelling maps/diagrams

## About the Speaking test

### Structure

- **Part 1:** The examiner asks general questions about familiar subjects such as your home, family, free-time interests and occupation or studies. It's common for the examiner to begin with questions relating to the practical side of your personal life, and then to move on to your leisure interests and/or other experiences of everyday life.
- **Part 2:** The examiner gives you a card with instructions to talk about a topic for up to two minutes. You have a minute to prepare, and can make notes if you wish. After the talk, the examiner may ask one or two 'rounding-off' questions about the topic.
- **Part 3:** The examiner asks further questions which develop the topic of Part 2 and generate a conversation featuring more abstract ideas and issues related to the topic of Part 2.

The total length is 11 to 14 minutes, and the whole interview is recorded.

### During the test

IELTS examiners are thoroughly trained to give standard conditions in the tests. They are assessing your ability to communicate effectively, and you will not usually lose marks for minor errors or hesitations. It's normal to feel nervous before the test, and the examiner will try to help you feel more relaxed. He/She will talk to you in a friendly and informal manner, and will not try to trick you into making mistakes.

In simple terms, the Speaking test starts easy and gradually becomes more difficult.

However, that doesn't mean that you shouldn't aim to give complex answers in Part 1.

The examiner works from a printed set of questions, but has some flexibility to ask additional questions in order to discover the extent of your English ability as accurately as possible.

You should try to give your ideas and opinions, but will be assessed solely on the quality of your English, not your knowledge of the topic or your personal views. The examiner will not ask you directly about politics or religion. You can refer to those if you wish (provided they are relevant to the question), but you are recommended to avoid topics which make you feel emotional, as this may distract you from giving your best possible performance in English.

### What are the examiners looking for?

The IELTS examiners are assessing several different things, and this book is designed to help you in each of these areas:

- **Vocabulary**

You need to have a good range of words and phrases relating to the typical topics featured in the test. Unlike the Writing test, it's not necessary to use formal, academic English. Standard conversational English is acceptable. You will gain marks for good use of collocations (or 'word partnerships'), fixed expressions and words and phrases for linking ideas.

- **Grammar**

You need to use grammar accurately. To get a high score, you need to show you can use a range of complex structures for purposes such as describing relationships between the past, present and future, and describing relationships of cause and effect. A common mistake made by candidates is to answer using simple and repetitive grammar rather than showing they can use more complex language.

- **Organization**

You need to speak in a clear, well-organized way and give answers which are easy to follow. The structure is not quite as important as it is in the Writing test, but you will gain marks for presenting your ideas in a well-structured way. A common mistake, especially in Part 2, is to give ideas which lack structure and a clear purpose.



- **Ideas and arguments**

You need to communicate complex and well-developed ideas and to answer the questions fully and with clear points of view. Common mistakes are failing to answer the examiner's questions properly, and giving answers which don't go into enough detail to demonstrate a high level of English.

- **Pronunciation**

The accuracy of your pronunciation is very important. Speaking with a non-native accent is not a problem, but the examiner will assess how easy it is for a listener to understand your pronunciation.

- **Speed**

If you speak too fast, it will make what you say difficult to follow, especially if you also make some language and pronunciation errors. If you speak too slowly, it may suggest that you need too much thinking time for normal conversation. It may also mean you don't have enough time to demonstrate your English fully.

The above features are often summarized as:

- fluency and coherence (general ability to communicate effectively)
- lexical resource (vocabulary)
- grammatical range and accuracy
- pronunciation.

## About the Listening test

### Structure

There are four sections, each comprising ten questions. You get one mark for each correct answer.

- **Section 1:** a conversation between two people in an everyday social situation
- **Section 2:** a monologue in an everyday social context
- **Section 3:** a conversation between two (or occasionally more than two) people in an education or training situation
- **Section 4:** a talk or lecture in an academic style on a subject of general interest

The test lasts for approximately 30 minutes, followed by ten minutes for transferring answers to the answer sheet. Each part of the recording is played only once.

### What are the examiners looking for?

The test is designed to assess your skills in several different areas, including:

- listening for the gist
- listening for the main points
- listening for detailed information
- listening to understand a complex idea or argument
- listening to infer the opinion of a speaker
- listening to make deductions about an unfamiliar topic
- listening to make deductions despite not understanding all the words.

## The IELTS scoring system

IELTS exam scores go up in steps of 0.5 from 1.0 to 9.0. A score of 9.0 is considered to be very near native-speaker level. However, as the tasks are difficult and the time is limited, even native speakers are not guaranteed to get a score of 9.0. It's rare for a non-native speaker to get more than 8.0, and very few organizations and institutions require a score of more than 7.5.

The Common European Framework of languages (CEF) categorizes IELTS scores as follows:

level	CEF	IELTS
Upper-intermediate	B2	5.0/5.5/6.0
Advanced	C1	6.5/7.0
Upper-advanced/Proficiency	C2	7.5+

Here is a guide to what you can normally do with these scores. However, be sure to check with the employer or educational institution you are applying to.

- 5.5–6.0 Entry to a university Foundation course
- 6.0–6.5 Entry to a Bachelor's degree course
- 6.5–7.0 Entry to a Master's degree course
- 7.0+ Typically required to work in English-speaking countries in professions such as medicine, law and accounting



## SPEAKING PART 1: OCCUPATIONS

way you spend your time if you don't have an occupation). It's a good idea to prepare

### Try it first!

Try talking about your occupation as if you were doing Speaking Part 1. If you are working with a partner, take it in turns to play the roles of examiner and candidate. Here are some typical questions.

**Examiner:** I'd like to ask you some questions about your occupation.

- Do you work, or are you a student?
- What's the most interesting part of being a [candidate's occupation]?
- What's the most difficult part of being a [candidate's occupation]?
- Would you say it's a good occupation? (Why? / Why not?)
- What kind of work would you like to do in the future?





## Spotlight 1

### Useful language for talking about your occupation

#### Grammar: present simple or present continuous?

Your choice of grammar shows how you feel about your occupation

**Present simple**  
~~I work for a company which makes car engine parts.~~  
 This implies you feel the job is long term

**Present continuous**  
~~I'm working for a company which makes car engine parts.~~  
 This implies you feel the job is temporary

~~I'm doing a Master's degree in Forest Management.~~

#### 1 Choose the best sentence from each pair.

- 1 a I study Chemistry at the local university.  
b I'm studying Chemistry at the local university.
- 2 a I don't work at the moment.  
b I'm not working at the moment.
- 3 a My family owns a chain of opticians, and I run one of the branches.  
b My family is owning a chain of opticians, and I'm running one of the branches.

#### Vocabulary: prepositions with work

#### 2 Choose the best preposition to complete each of these sentences.

- 1 I work *to / for* a marketing company.
- 2 I work *in / at* advertising.
- 3 I'm working *of / at* the local library.
- 4 I work *by / with* some interesting people.
- 5 I'm working *on / about* a very interesting project at the moment.
- 6 I work *as / at* a theatrical lighting designer.

#### Vocabulary: expressions connected with work

#### 3 Complete the sentences below giving opinions about occupations using the expressions in the box.

have to work long hours    get paid a lot    be healthy  
 work in the home    physically demanding    work long term

- 1 Doctors often have to .....
- 2 I work in a restaurant, and I don't have a regular salary. I'm .....
- 3 I love seeing children learn. That's why I get so much ..... from being a teacher.
- 4 I don't work for any one newspaper. I'm a freelance journalist. That means I have no .....
- 5 In sales, you can start at the bottom and work your way to the top. It's a job with excellent .....
- 6 I'm a road mender. My job mostly involves filling holes in the road. It's tiring and ..... work.

#### Tip

There are many fixed expressions in English. Learning and using them can make your English seem more 'natural', and will help improve your score in both the Speaking and Writing tests.

## Exam skills 1

### Giving plenty of detail in descriptions

Don't just say *I'm a student* or *I work in a restaurant*. Give more details in your answer. For example:

- *I'm a third-year student studying Law at the local university.*
- *I'm working as a waiter in a pizza restaurant in the main square of this town. You may have seen it. It's called Pappagallo.*

The examiner may ask for your opinion or feelings about your occupation. It can be a good strategy to contrast a positive and a negative opinion. For example:

- *It's not an easy subject. There's a lot of reading, and the exams are very difficult, but it'll be worth it.*
- *I'll be able to get a good job when I graduate, and the career prospects for lawyers are excellent.*
- *It's hard work and – I have to be honest – the pay isn't great, but it can be a lot of fun, especially when the restaurant is busy. I work with some really nice people.*

#### Tip

Adding your feelings and opinions can make your speaking more interesting and can help improve your score. However, extreme and intolerant opinions should be avoided, especially concerning race and religion.

- 1 Write a description of your occupation. Include some suitable opinions/feelings.

### Language check

- 2 Look at your description from Exercise 1. What tenses have you used? Can you change them to include more advanced tenses? Can you change the vocabulary to include some more advanced words and phrases?

Examples:

... the exams are very difficult. → ... the exams are really tough.

I meet lots of interesting people. → I've met lots of memorable characters.

### Prepare and practise

- 3 Prepare your ideas for speaking about your occupation. Write some brief notes on ways to answer these questions. Can you use the ideas in Spotlight 1 (page 12) and above?

- Do you work, or are you a student?
- What's the most interesting part of being a [candidate's occupation]?
- What's the most difficult part of being a [candidate's occupation]?
- Would you say it's a good occupation?  
(Why? / Why not?)
- What kind of work would you like to do in the future?

- 4 If you are working with a partner, role-play talking about your occupations as if in Part 1 of the Speaking test again – one person is the examiner and the other is the candidate. Use the same sample questions, and refer to the notes you made in Exercise 3 if you wish to. When you have finished, reverse roles and repeat.

- 5 Write a detailed description of your occupation. Use a dictionary to describe it as accurately as you can. This will help you to organize your ideas and to learn new words that will be useful.

#### Tip

You won't be able to write notes in Part 1 of the exam (you can in Part 2), but doing it now will help you to organize your ideas.


#### Tip

Although it's a good strategy to prepare your ideas and learn useful language, don't memorize a speech and then give it in the test. What you say should seem spontaneous.





## Listen 1

- 1**  **1** Listen to the recording, which is based on Speaking Part 1. Answer each of these questions using no more than TWO WORDS.
- 1 The candidate is doing a degree in .....
  - 2 He is also working as a .....
  - 3 The most interesting part of the job is conversations with the .....
  - 4 The most difficult part is dealing with some of the parents of children who .....
  - 5 In the future, he wants to work in a .....
- 2** Now look at the audio transcript on page 105 and check your answers.
- 3** Was the recording very different from your role-play (Exercise 4, page 13)? How was it different? How could you improve further? Discuss your ideas with a partner or in small groups. Think about these areas:
- 1 Did you have plenty of things to say?
  - 2 Were your ideas joined together in a logical sequence?
  - 3 Did you use the best possible vocabulary?
  - 4 Did you use the best possible grammar?
  - 5 Did you speak in a relaxed and confident way without a lot of hesitation?
  - 6 Was your pronunciation good?

### Pronunciation focus: sentence stress


- 1**  Listen to the beginning of the recording again. Notice how some words in the sentence are stressed. For example:

*I'm also working as a lifeguard at my local swimming pool.*

In this case, *lifeguard* and *swimming pool* are the most important words, so they are stressed the most. *Working* and *local* are less important, so they have less stress. The other words (*I'm also ... as a ... at my ...*) are words which the listener can almost guess from the context, so they receive the least stress of all.

#### Tip

The examiner will consider your pronunciation when deciding the grade to award you. You will not be expected to sound like a native speaker to get a high score, but of course it is a good idea to improve your pronunciation as much as you can.

- 4**  **1** Listen to the whole recording again while reading the audio transcript on page 105. While you listen, underline the most important words in the candidate's responses – the words which are stressed the most. Then practise saying those sentences with the underlined words stressed.
- 5** Work in pairs, asking each other the questions below. Again, one person is the examiner, the other is the candidate. When you have finished, reverse roles and repeat. Try to include improvements you noticed when you listened to the recording, and try to improve your use of sentence stress.
- Describe the place where you work or study.
  - How long have you worked/studied there?
  - What do you like about this place?
  - How do you usually travel there?
  - What changes would improve your journey there?



## SPEAKING PART 1: PLACES OF RESIDENCE



Another common topic in Part 1 of the Speaking test is personal circumstances – the place where you live, your family and your daily life. As with your occupation, it's a good idea to prepare some ideas to talk about. What can you say about these topics that is interesting or unexpected? Can you give some opinions as well as the basic information?

### Try it first!

**Try talking about the place where you live as if you were doing Speaking Part 1. If you are working with a partner, take it in turns to play the roles of examiner and candidate. Here are some typical questions.**

**Examiner:** I'd like to talk about the place where you live.

- Can you describe the building you live in?
- Is it similar to other buildings in the area?
- Is it a convenient location for you?
- What do you like about living there?
- What changes would improve the area where you live?



## Spotlight 2

### Useful language for talking about your place of residence

#### Grammar: present perfect or present perfect continuous?

Your choice of grammar should reflect whether your living situation is permanent, long term or temporary.

##### Present perfect (permanent or long term)

*I've lived in this city all my life.*

*My family has lived in this area since my grandparents moved here in about 1950.*

*I've lived in the same house for 15 years. I think it's time to move.*

##### Present perfect continuous (temporary)

*I've been staying with friends for the last few weeks.*

*I've only been living here since last Tuesday.*

*I've been looking for somewhere to live which is closer to work.*

However, with live for longer-term but non-permanent situations, often both forms are possible.

*I've lived in university accommodation for the last two years.*

*I've been living in university accommodation for the last two years.*

The second version emphasises that the situation is not permanent, but these two versions could be interchangeable in many situations.

##### Natural English: be instead of live

It's common to use a form of the verb *to be* to imply *live*.

*I'm in rented accommodation at the moment.*

*I've been in a college residence since I started my course.*

*We're on the seventh floor.*

#### 1 Look at these pairs of sentences. Which version is better? Or are both good?

- 1 a I've lived here since I was two years old.  
b I've been living here since I was two years old.
- 2 a I've lived here for quite a long time.  
b I've been living here for quite a long time.
- 3 a I've lived with my parents since I graduated last year.  
b I've been living with my parents since I graduated last year.
- 4 a I live very near the city centre.  
b I'm very near the city centre.
- 5 a I've lived in several different places.  
b I've been living in several different places.

#### 2 Present perfect or present perfect continuous? Complete each gap with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

- 1 It's the nicest place I've ever ..... (live)
- 2 I haven't ..... very many other places. (see)
- 3 We've ..... of moving for a few months now. (think)
- 4 I've never ..... in rented accommodation. (live)
- 5 I haven't ..... a new place for very long. (look for)
- 6 I've never ..... in a university residence before. (stay)
- 7 I've just ..... a really nice apartment. (find)
- 8 We still haven't found the kind of place we've ..... to find. (hope)